

**Comments on Elder Abuse Issues, by James Emmert
Chairperson of the Elder Abuse Strategy Group.
Advocates For Senior Issues, Grand Rapids, MI**

I am here today to point out what we feel are viable changes to several bills that are presently waiting in this House Committee. I hope these suggestions will be given consideration in the overall intentions of this meeting.

Item #1: Increasing Penalties on Elder Abuse Crimes.

Senate bills 455, 459, 465, and House bills 4337, 4339, and 4340 are all directed towards increasing the present penalties for various acts of abuse and exploitation of our vulnerable adults.

History shows that most judges rarely hand out maximum sentences for the abuse or exploitation of any victims, let alone our vulnerable adult victims. Reasons are many, including lack of jail space, rampant plea bargaining by our prosecutors, lack of available court time and court employees, progressively higher costs of incarceration and lack of responsible funding.

Our Elder Abuse Strategy Group would like to see less energy spent on what, we feel, are useless penalty enhancements and provide more efforts towards creating a "Mandatory Minimum Sentence" for each of the four levels of abuse. This would provide a reasonable guarantee for the public that all abusers found guilty of any abuse would serve at least a justified, accountable sentence in the form of jail-time, fines, and community service. Therefore, we ask for your consideration on our proposal.

Overall goal: To trade unused higher penalties for a guaranteed minimum sentence for all of those that are continuing to abuse our vulnerable adults.